

IT'S A SCARY TIME



BVS

WEA members will need to use our brain to find our own heart and courage.

Education bears the biggest budget cuts in special session

As expected, the state Legislature cut \$311 million from the K-12 and higher education budgets in a special session earlier this month. Education suffered more than half of the \$588 million in total cuts the Legislature approved.

In the biggest cut, legislators voted to take \$208 million in federal education funding allocated earlier this year, using it to pay for state costs in other areas. They also cut the remaining \$39 million in funding for smaller class sizes in kindergarten through fourth grade.

The latest cuts mean class sizes will increase, despite the state's constitutional obligation to fully fund basic education. Yet small class sizes are essential to a quality education — and Washington already ranks 48th in the nation. Outgoing Sen. Eric Oemig proposed an unsuccessful amendment that would have protected funding for K-4 class sizes.

“Smaller class size makes it easier for teachers to individualize instruction for all of their students. The smaller the class size, the greater the chance of our students exceeding state standards,” said Rachel Aeby, a first-grade teacher in Franklin Pierce.

Pro-public education legislators acknowledged that additional budget cuts will hurt children and families.

“These cuts that are included in this bill will have a real impact,” said House Majority Leader Pat Sullivan. “Whether it’s school children or those that get health care through community clinics ... these are tough choices that’ll affect citizens across this entire state.”

Legislators approved the latest budget cuts as they grapple with an immediate budget shortfall. Gov. Chris Gregoire was scheduled to propose her budget for the next two budget years at the time *We 2.0* went to press. It is sure to include millions more in cuts to K-12 and higher education.

While losses already have occurred in classrooms, our students deserve an education that will allow them to successfully contribute our state's future. As an Association, members still can help set district priorities and can work with the community to continue to support vital local funding for public education.



WEA is partnering with others in the NEA Pacific Region to develop an ESP organizing training that recognizes the power of standing together and reaches out to communities to continue to support vital local funding.

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WEA book drive sends stories of hope, friendship to Katrina-ravaged schools

As the holiday season brings snow, joy and bounty to many, we share lessons learned in Port Sulphur, La., last July on a sultry summer day. Lessons about a community in the Plaquemines Parish on the southern tip of a peninsula in Louisiana about an hour outside of New Orleans, and the people who teach there.

On that particular Friday, three van loads of WEA members, staff and friends took the day to travel down to South Plaquemines High School to help unload, sort and distribute more than 11,000 books that were shipped from here to Louisiana last summer with help from Global Experience Specialists (GES).

“Kids needing books. That’s all you gotta’ say is ‘a kid needs a book.’ It’s the pathway to everything else,” WEA-Cascade UniServ Council President Tim Brittell said.

Donations came from every corner of the state. Book topics ranged from early readers to how-tos to adult fictions — and everything in between.

“I went in classrooms scouring for books,” Northshore EA’s Lynn Emerson said. “Parents had students go home and go through their own books to make donations. I just want these kids to have books in their hands so they can see the world and enjoy what’s going on.”

When WEA decided to collect books for Plaquemines, it was because the area was battered by Hurricane Katrina five years ago. Entire school libraries were washed away. What we didn’t know, at the time, was that this was an area which would be hit again by the Deepwater Horizon explosion and oil spill.

“When I got the e-mail (from WEA) I thought that we’d probably get a couple of hundred books that we could use in our classrooms. I did not think it was going to be the sheer volume that you guys sent down,” South Plaquemines High School language arts teacher Jennifer Dotson said. “You hear someone say, ‘You want free books?’ I say yes every time.”

WEA members were in New Orleans last summer for the National Education Association’s annual Representative Assembly. The first 20 or so delegates who signed up to help with the books met in the hotel lobby to travel across the Mississippi River and down south to Port Sulphur.



WEA members helped sort more than 11,000 donated books at South Plaquemines High School last summer.

“Sometimes you can’t give money,” Yakima high school teacher Eddie Brown said. “Sometimes you can’t give books, but you can just show up and provide labor and let them know they have support.”

Seattle EA administrative secretary Antoinette Felder said the visit was a “reality check of what we take for granted a lot of times in our schools. It’s a community that is coming together after the downfall and it is nice to see all of these people helping each other in the summer months.”

South Plaquemines High School sophomore Ricole Williams was among those to greet WEA members: “If y’all can come way down here to a place that a lot of people don’t really pay much attention to, it’s important for me to help.”

Our union brothers and sisters in Louisiana were overwhelmed.

“I count my blessings and this is a blessing that you are providing books for our children and we really appreciate it,” first-grade teacher Mary Ancar said.

Eighth-grade teacher Robby Goff knows some of the biographies on wrestlers will capture the attention of some of his students. Science teacher Cathleen Trulson found science lab items in the mix.

“I thought the union was supposed to defend me,” junior high teacher Chris Kardish said. “I didn’t know that the union does things like this. It broadened my understanding of what a union does.”

Dotson, the language arts teacher, put dibs on the brand new (set of 24) World Drama books.

“My kids love plays,” she said, taking stock of the donations. “They did *Julius Caesar* last year and loved it. I’ve seen a lot of young adult and contemporary literature which we don’t have a lot of in my class so that’s great.”

Freshman Darione Powell was particularly excited by the number of books from the popular *Twilight* series.

“It’s good to know that there are people that still care; people that still want to help; people that are willing to help that have an open heart and an open mind.”

Port Sulphur resident and teacher James Saik lost his 3,000-square-foot home because of Katrina. Like so many of the teachers in the school, Saik

used to commute all the way from New Orleans but he and his wife bought property in the area and built their home. They escaped Katrina with three changes of clothing and one car. They saw their home perched in a tree on a satellite picture after the hurricane. Their home was destroyed in 23 feet of water, but they have returned to start anew.

“These books you sent are totally unexpected, but very well received,” Saik said. “After Katrina, we are grateful for so much that we took for granted before.”

For WEA members, the book drive and visit was an unforgettable experience.

“Getting to know the teachers today — they are just like us, no different,” WEA-Cascade’s Brittell said. “They do the same things all of us do and that is they beg, borrow and steal from each other and they get the things they need — and the motivation is the kids.”

“I learned about dignity in disaster,” Moses Lake EA teacher Ted Mack said. “I learned that you can teach anywhere. Down here, there could be school one day and the next day it’s gone and the teachers here — the dedicated professionals — are still willing to come and to teach where there’s so little ... that takes dignity.”

WEA members donated container loads of books, along with sweat equity and support, to colleagues in Louisiana last summer. Yakima high school teacher Eddie Brown (center) and Spokane instructional assistant Joe Ramos (right), help sort through the collection.



A different kind of

George Sheehan was a cardiologist famous for renewing his life at 45 by beginning to run again (he was a track star in college) and by becoming the first sub-five-minute-mile running time by a 50-year-old. He wrote a weekly column for a local paper, then *Runner's World*.

The newly aligned family includes (clockwise from top left): Rachel Smith-Mosel, Sandy Mosel, Laura, Keyvontrey, Julien, Kyle and Brennen (center).

Sheehan told people, "Success means having the courage, the determination, and the will to become the person you were meant to be." This quote is at the bottom of every e-mail sent out by Rachel Smith-Mosel, a WEA member who is currently an administrative intern in Tacoma. Smith-Mosel, who also describes herself as a cheerful insomniac, takes what Sheehan says very seriously.

This is a story about how Smith-Mosel and her partner, Sandy Mosel, had the courage, the determination and, most important, the will to become the

people they want to become.

While many people take time, toward the end of December, to reflect about the year that has passed, to perhaps make some charitable donations and to create some resolutions for the upcoming year, Rachel Smith-Mosel and Sandy Mosel take time to do that in the autumn during the Jewish High Holiday season.

"At Rosh Ha Shannah (the Jewish New Year)," Smith-Mosel says, "we take time to reflect upon the goals we want to achieve in life, and on the overall direction we want to travel and on the destination we want to reach."

This kind of reflection includes "big life questions," such as, "What kind of character do I want to have? How do I want to use my potential? What impact do I want to make with my life? How am I repairing the world? What legacy do I hope to leave?"

"On Yom Kippur (the Jewish Day of Atonement), we take time to recalculate along the journey," she says.

Five years ago her family recalculated. They set themselves on a new and exciting path. Though the couple was very busy with everything that comes with raising three of their own children, there was a student named Michael who needed a home.

Michael was not the first child Smith-Mosel had come across who needed a home, but, "We overcame what we adults perceived as impossible limitations. We listened to the purity of our children who see and speak the truth when we, as adults, cannot hear it. We opened our lives and our hearts to a whole new future," Smith-Mosel says.

They became foster parents and made room for Michael. It was not without great doubt and concern.

"It took a huge kick in the pants from our kids who simply said, 'we have a home and he needs one.' We should listen to the wisdom of our children more often," Smith-Mosel says. "Basically, our family aligned our convictions with our actions."

During the time that the two parents were in that reflective mode, they say, they had a nagging sense of something bigger they should be doing if only they had the time, the energy, the money.

Though their lives are far busier than before, and



alignment

more chaotic and uncertain in every way, the two are thankful that their birth children pushed them to choose life and to help others to choose life as well.

“Fast forward five years, 30 foster children, one adopted and one soon-to-be adopted and our birth children are thriving.

They are courageous. They stand up for and with one another. They have boundless compassion. And our lives are whole,” Smith-Mosel says.

She said two people whose voices inspired her partner, Sandy, and her to recalculate their life’s journeys were a great rabbi, and a great minister and civil rights activist.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, a leading Jewish theologian and philosopher of the 20th century, and Martin Luther King Jr. were friends. Heschel supported King’s peaceful non-violence. He joined King’s movement and together, arm in arm, the two men marched in Selma.

“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends,” King said.

“The opposite of good is not evil; the opposite of good is indifference,” Heschel said.

Like the runner Sheehan, Mosel and Smith-Mosel discovered that adding so many people to their lives keeps them grounded and centered in a way that was missing before. Their

‘Live in hope rather than in fear restricted by perceived limitations.

Say yes to your higher purpose or calling — whatever that may be.’

story is not aimed at turning everyone into foster parents although they do say it has made their lives richer in every way. We share their story during the holiday season to inspire.

“Stop. Breathe. Listen. Align your life with your values,” Smith-Mosel says. “Live in hope rather than in fear restricted by perceived limitations. Say yes to your higher purpose or calling — whatever that may be.”



Left: Sandy Mosel gives Laura her undivided attention.



Top right: Sandy Mosel and Rachel Smith-Mosel adopted Julien (in white T-shirt) January 2010 on his two-year anniversary with the family.

Bottom right: Kyle and Laura were a force in influencing their parents to open their home to more children.

Building power

Groundbreaking training offers ESP members organizing skills and voice

Bad times don't have to rip the future away from your control.

A dramatic new training program is reminding education support professionals (ESP) across Washington that even one voice can bring change.

One voice can coax others to stand together. And together, we can help shape our own destiny.

It's the simple formula that has given strength to individual union members for generations. But those lessons are being made real for educators today in a groundbreaking new training that will span three Western cities and three long weekends.

NEA's Pacific Region Organizing for Power trainings kicked off this fall in SeaTac with an overview of strategies, then jumped to Nevada for practical experience, and will wrap up in January in

northern California with the tools local organizers need back home. About 170 ESP members participated from Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, California and Nevada, and teamed up with 30 of their association's regional UniServ staff. In October, they met in the sprawling ESP local in Clark County, Nevada, for hands-on, on-the-ground practice in one-on-one member organizing.

"This is an NEA training unlike anything you have ever done at NEA," Jorge Rivera, an NEA local organizer assigned to Clark County, said. "We go to conferences, (and then) we sit around and we do nothing about it. Well, this weekend is about doing something. ..."

Teams fanned out to homes and work sites for Clark County's 12,000 ESP employees. They listened and talked about employees' concerns with their local union, about looming threats on the political and union fronts, and ways to get involved to continue to fight for satisfactory wages and benefits.

Rosemary Wolf, WEA's ESP coordinator, noted that united action and one-on-one organizing — among our members and out in the community — is still an avenue to talk about education values and spending priorities, even with grim budget cuts looming.

"The Organizing for Power model is not specific to ESP members," Wolf said. "All WEA members can benefit by recognizing the power of standing together and reaching out to their community with a message about the threats and opportunities facing education today."

The trainings were born, in part, from the Living Wage campaigns that ESP locals in Washington have been leading in their local districts in recent years. While those campaigns continue, leaders are also giving increased attention amid the current climate of layoffs to the role and value ESP members provide in offering individual student services. The training is a joint project of NEA Pacific Region and staff trainers from NSO, the union representing education association staff nationwide. State education associations and locals are joining in to provide release time and help with expenses.

"This effort was sparked by a need Washington's ESP locals had to move compensation forward," Wolf said. "Our members are learning and practicing a skill set based around common values and beliefs, around using relationships to push a local's capacity to organize and build power, and around recognizing their union's collective power. This direct, hands-on approach has given our ESP members the strength and dignity to take control of their destiny — at the bargaining table and within the community — to improve their wages and working conditions."



Education support professionals from Washington and other Pacific region states go door to door to talk with Clark County, Nevada, ESP members about union involvement.

Learn more about the ESP Organizing for Power program in two online videos at www.washingtonnea.org/power

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A NOVEL IDEA

Educators deciding what's ahead for education ...

Tacoma middle school teacher Andy Coons has been named to a national, independent commission that is charged with crafting a new “teacher-centered” vision for the teaching profession.

Coons, a National Board certified teacher, was selected along with only a handful of others from among some 250 nominees nationwide. He currently is serving as president of the Tacoma Education Association.

“I am humbled and excited to be nominated for commission membership,” Coons said. “My hope is that the voice of practicing teachers can make transparent the current complexities of practice we face, and act as a reflective check to new policy implementation.”

The Commission on Effective Teachers and Teaching was created by the National Education Association as a national, independent commission. Commission members will:

- ◆ Study and analyze existing standards, definitions, policies, and practices related to teacher effectiveness and effective teaching, and craft a “teachers’ definition” of an effective teacher and effective teaching.
- ◆ Craft a new vision of a teacher profession which is led by teachers and ensures teacher and teaching effectiveness.
- ◆ Craft a comprehensive set of recommendations for the NEA about the union’s role in advancing and promoting teacher effectiveness and the teaching profession.
- ◆ Craft a comprehensive set of recommendations for education leaders and policy makers about the future of the teaching profession and the role of teachers in control and governance.

A key difference in this commission is that a majority of members will be practicing teachers who are considered accomplished. Additional members will be accomplished teachers who have moved on to other fields in education such as administration or union leadership.

“It is ironic that so many policy innovations and decisions are made by those who assume they understand education and teaching simply because they once attended school,” Coons noted. “I am not interested in simple solutions or reinstatements of romanticized past practices as answers to today’s educational issues. What’s lacking is an understanding of the current work of today’s teachers who navigate high stakes achievement accountability, the complexities of the lives and the diverse needs of the students we are teaching, and the continuous art of balancing relationships, high expectations, best pedagogical practices and rigorous content.”

NEA’s goal is to improve teaching and the teaching profession by transforming the role of teachers and education unions in controlling and governing the profession. The group will help re-examine NEA’s strategies and priorities related to teaching and teacher policy, to reaffirm them or help transform them in ways that could represent a significant departure from current practices while still reflecting core values of our members.

“As an independent commission of practitioners, we can bring real world, common-sense clarity to the national conversations vying to define today’s quality teachers and teaching practices,” Coons said.

The commission will meet four to six times over the course of the year, will conduct several public hearings, and will produce at least two reports with recommendations as outlined above. This will be demanding work, but given that a majority of commissioners will be practicing teachers, accommodations will be made regarding meeting schedules, substitute teacher payments, and generous staff support to ensure that teachers can continue to focus on their classrooms and students.



Tacoma’s Andy Coons is part of an independent commission that will look at the teaching profession and make recommendations on maximizing teacher and teaching effectiveness.



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Shari Ludden

“We need to make sure the Legislature fully understands what the cuts have done to our school; our classrooms; our students. We need to ensure **NO MORE CUTS** to our classrooms. Not because we just think it’s a bad idea, but because it will seriously impact our ability to keep up with the amazing work we have been doing. We **CANNOT** do more with less. The Legislature needs to see the impact on our students. I know WEA has always had these goals, but now more than ever they need to see we are at a critical point — help us or we begin to fail.”

— *Shari Ludden,*
Stanwood-Camano EA



Tim Kopp

“One big challenge will be dealing with the budget cuts and finding ways to minimize the harm done to our students. Equally dangerous will be the effort by well-meaning (and not-so-well-meaning) legislators and policymakers to look like they are doing something positive by passing another round of education ‘improvements’ that don’t address our real and immediate need for more funding.”

— *Tim Kopp*
WEA-Lower Columbia council president

‘We **CANNOT** do more with less’ and other thoughts on the challenges we face

The upcoming legislative session, which starts in January, is going to be the toughest in recent memory. Legislators must cut billions from the budget at the same time outside groups continue to push education reform. Visit www.WashingtonEA.org to stay up-to-date on education news and the latest plans hatched by legislators, plus links to ways that you can get involved and take action.